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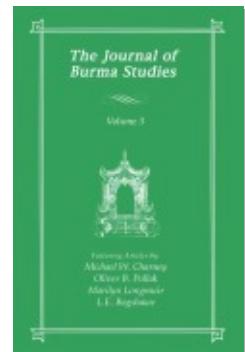
Rise of a Mainland Trading State: Rahkaing Under the Early  
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# RISE OF A MAINLAND TRADING STATE

## Rahkaing Under the Early Mrauk-U Kings, c. 1430-1603<sup>1</sup>

Michael W. Charney\*

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*This study of the rise of the maritime kingdom of Rahkaing (Arakan) in the 15th and 16th centuries attempts to demonstrate how the kings of Danya-wati gradually drew other power centers in the Rahkaing littoral (including Mekha-wati, Dwara-wati, and Chittagong) into its political orbit. Vital to this political centralization were the collateral processes of increasing maritime trade, demographic growth spurred by resettled war captives, the suppression of rival lowland tribes, supplies of firearms, and the development of a multi-directional system of religious patronage. By the end of the 16th century, Mrauk-U rulers, as both Buddhist kings and Islamic sultans, controlled the entire Rahkaing littoral as one kingdom and had begun their expansion into neighboring regions as distant as Dacca in Bengal and Pegu in Burma.*

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### Introduction

Previous historiography has long recognized a link between growing maritime trade and the rise of the kingdom of Rahkaing

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(Arakan) in the early modern period.<sup>2</sup> However, no substantial analysis has been forthcoming of how trade and other maritime-derived resources influenced the mechanisms of internal political control or the relationship between these mechanisms and the demographic, cultural, and economic trends vital to early modern Rahkaing statecraft.<sup>3</sup> The outstanding question, then, is how local rulers in the Danya-wati basin came to dominate the entire Rahkaing littoral, constructing a kingdom that, by the end of the 16th century, also encompassed Lower Bengal and Lower Myanma (Burma).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A glossary of place names and Burmese-language terms follows the list of references at the end of this article, as does a chronology of events pertinent to the discussion presented herein. Romanization, especially of indigenous place names, is based on usages common in precolonial texts. I have used the conventional system (with an allowance for Rahkaing idiosyncrasies) as presented in John Okell, *A Guide to the Romanization of Burmese* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1971), 31-45, 66-67, which I also used in Michael W. Charney, "Shallow-draft Boats, Guns, and the Aye-ra-wa-ti: Continuity and Change in Ship Structure and River Warfare in Precolonial Myanma," *Oriens Extremus* 40(1):16-63 (1997). Thus, in this paper, Arakan will be referred to as "Rahkaing," Burma as "Myanma," Syriam as "Than-lyn," and so on. On the rise of the Rahkaing kingdom in the early modern period, see Maurice Collis and San Shwe Bu, "Arakan's Place in the Civilization of the Bay: A Study of Coinage and Foreign Relations," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 15(1):34-51 (1925); D. G. E. Hall, "Studies in Dutch Relations with Arakan," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 26(1):1-31 (1931).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Michael W. Charney, "The 1598-99 Siege of Pegu and the Expansion of Arakanese Imperial Power into Lower Burma," *Journal of Asian History* 28(1):39-57 (1994) and M. Ana de Barros Serra Marques Guedes' masterful work *Interferência e Integração dos Portugueses na Birmânia, ca 1580-1630* (Lisbôa: Fundação Oriente, 1994). Both fail to analyze the Rahkaing-Portuguese relationship as only part of a broader range of Mrauk-U dynastic statecraft that both predated and outlasted the Portuguese presence in Rahkaing. See also references to early modern Rahkaing in Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680*, vol. II, *Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1993), 29, 40, 171, 210, 234, 250, 282-283, 311; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History* (London: Longman, 1993), 79, 128-129, 152, 168, 259. It should be mentioned, however, that work with a focus on indigenous developments has been forthcoming in regard to post Mrauk-U Dynasty Rahkaing. See, for example, Jacques Leider, "La Route de Am (Arakan), Contribution à l'étude d'une route terrestre entre la Birmanie et le Golfe du Bengale," *Journal Asiatique* 282(2):335-370 (1994).

<sup>4</sup> The Danya-wati river basin refers to the wet plains area of Rahkaing watered by the Mayu, Kulàdan, and Leìmro rivers. *Danya-wati* is the classical name for Rahkaing kingdoms based in this area.

In this paper, I will argue that the rulers of the Early Mrauk-U Dynasty (c.1430-1603),<sup>5</sup> in their efforts to gain regional hegemony, did not depend solely on maritime-derived resources but instead engaged in a complex program to develop the human, agricultural, and commercial resources of the Danya-wati river basin, while simultaneously restricting and controlling these same resources in outlying centers. The ability of Early Mrauk-U dynastic rulers to achieve both ends hinged partly on the stability of maritime trade and partly on the relatively limited ability of neighboring powers permanently to influence developments within the Rahkaing littoral. Further, the nature of the early modern maritime trade boom favored attempts by the Mrauk-U court to establish a monopoly over this trade. Early Mrauk-U dynastic hegemony within the Rahkaing littoral did not begin to unravel until the beginning of the 17th century, when changes in maritime commerce and encroaching influences from the northwest and east let loose pent-up centripetal forces.<sup>6</sup>

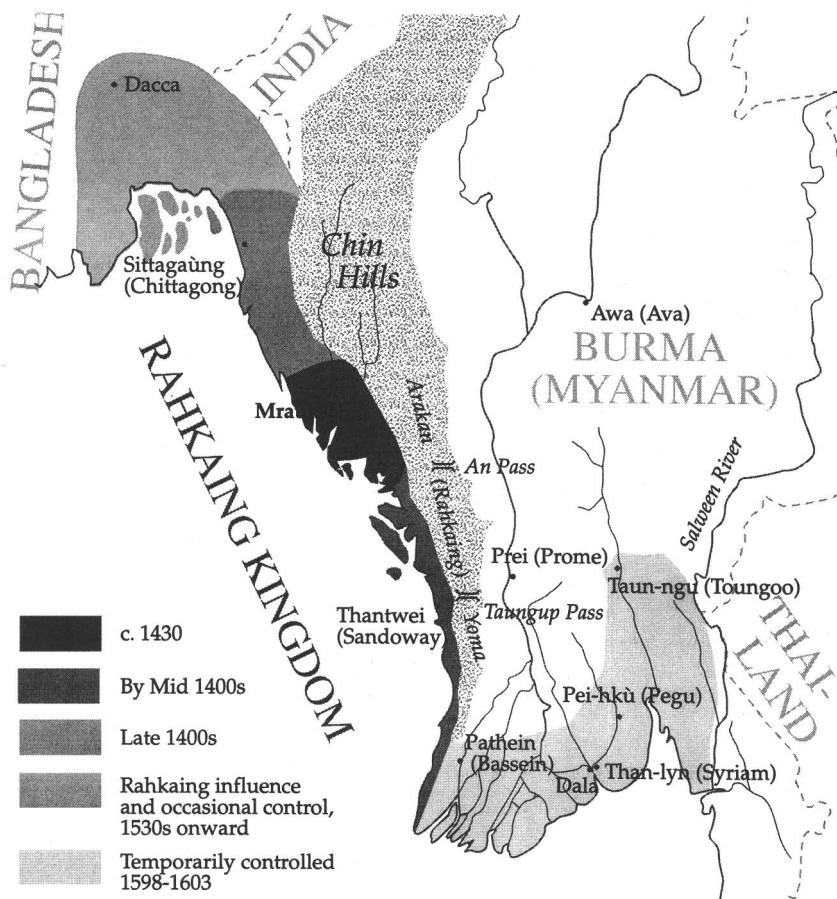
### **Development of Early Trade in the Rahkaing Littoral**

The initial growth of 15<sup>th</sup>-century maritime trade in Rahkaing had much to do with the development of contacts with Muslim trade centers elsewhere in Southeast Asia and in India. The Rahkaing littoral and Lower Myanma delta benefited particularly from the establishment, early in the 15th century, of Melaka, whose role as both commercial *entrepot* and Muslim sultanate helped foster the development of trade routes between the Muslim ports of eastern India and the Straits of Melaka. Throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, communities of Muslim and other traders in the Rahkaing littoral and in Lower Myanma owed their existence partly to their

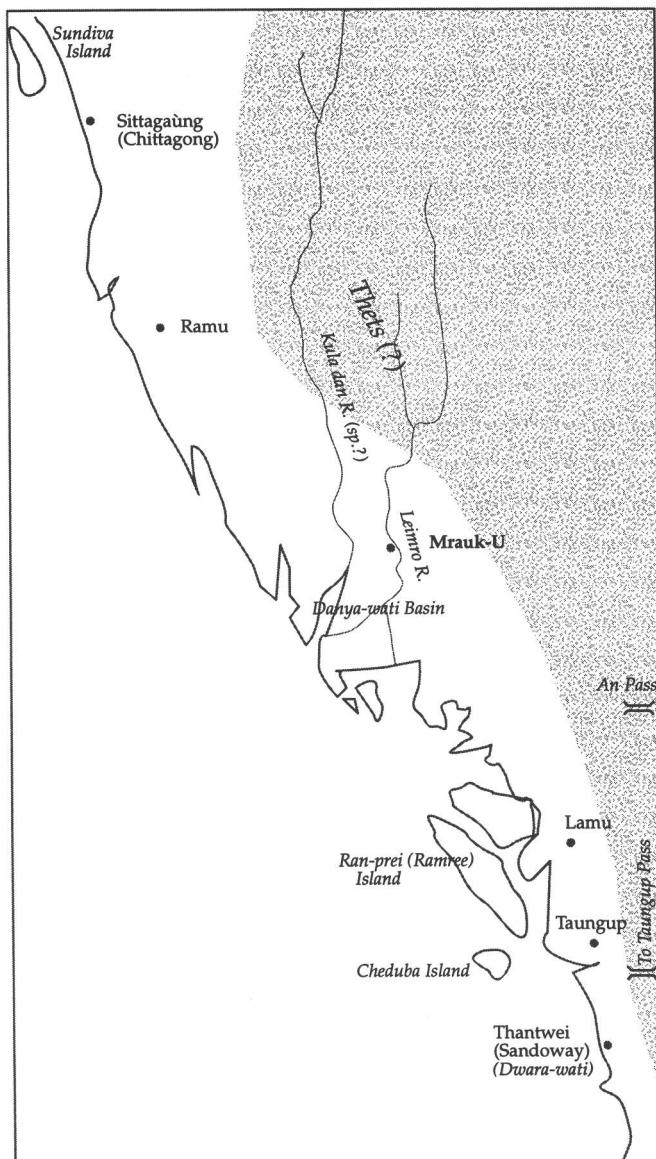
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<sup>5</sup> This periodization of the Early Mrauk-U dynasty is justified by the dramatic change, from 1603, in the character of the Mrauk-U dynasty and the trajectory of the Rahkaing kingdom's development.

<sup>6</sup> This paper focuses on the rise of the Early Mrauk-U dynasty only until 1603. Later developments are discussed in Michael W. Charney, "Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom of Southeast Asia: Forces of Instability and Political Disintegration in Western Burma (Arakan), 1603-1701," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41(2):185-219 (1998).



### Growth of Mrauk-U, c. 1430-1603



**The Rahkaing Core c. 1500**

position midway along these trade routes.<sup>7</sup>

While the potential benefits of Muslim trade connections may have been well known to rulers throughout Danya-wati, Nara-meik-hla (r. 1404-1434), founder of the town of Mrauk-U and of the Mrauk-U Dynasty, was apparently the first ruler in Rahkaing actively to seek connections with Muslim India. This attempt may have been inspired by previous contacts with Muslim traders (perhaps fostered by Danya-wati's position as a major outlet for rubies from Awa [Ava]), but a more certain factor was the fall of the Laùn-kret Dynasty, which left other major centers in the Rahkaing littoral, such as Thantwei (Sandoway), under the control of the Muns (Mons) and therefore effectively eliminated as potential indigenous rivals for the Muslim trade.<sup>8</sup> In any case, once the Muslim commercial connection was established, Mrauk-U sought to monopolize the resources necessary to its development. In exchange for the Muslim court of Bengal's support in establishing Mrauk-U control of the Danya-wati river basin region, Nara-meik-hla and his successors accepted nominal Muslim vassalage and the trappings of Muslim sultanship.<sup>9</sup> Early Mrauk-U dynastic rulers in this way became the chief patrons of Islamic culture in the region, and

<sup>7</sup> In the 1430s, some Muslims who accompanied Nara-meik-hla on his return from Bengal built at Mrauk-U a mosque called the Santikan. See E. Forchhammer, *Report on the Antiquities of Arakan* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1892), 39. In the 1510s, Tomé Pires mentions Klings as well as Muns (Mons) and Bengalis. See Tomé Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires: An Account of the East, From the Red Sea to Japan, written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515*, Armando Cortesão, trans. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944), I, 95. When the ambassadors from the King of Masulipatam arrived at the Mrauk-U court, they were supported by a Turkish courtier, who was in the confidence of the Rahkaing king, and by many other Muslims in the court. See Fernão Guerreiro, *Relação Anual das Coisas que Fizeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus Nas Suas Missões...Nos Anos de 1600 a 1609*, Artur Viegas, ed. (Coimbra: University of Coimbra, 1930), I:291. On the process of secondary trade in Lower Myanma, see Victor B. Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580-1760* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 25-28.

<sup>8</sup> U Kulà, *Maha-Razawin-kyi*, Saya Pwa, ed. (Yangon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1960), II:7-8; Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-krì Arei-taw Sadan*, 1775, microfilmed palm-leaf manuscript collected by the Burma Academic Expedition of Kagoshima University (Japan), 11a. (Note: page numbers for this and other unpublished manuscripts microfilmed in this project follow my personal system.)

<sup>9</sup> According to one account, Nara-meik-hla, in exchange for 1,400 Bengali warriors, "took the seal" (submitted to being a vassal) of the sultan of Bengal. Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," in *Ayei-taw-poun (6) Saung Twei-tha Ma-hok Myanma-mìn-mya Ayei-taw-poun* (Yangon: Pan-hso-dan, n.d.), 44.

through this role maintained connections between visiting Muslim traders and Rahkaing commercial establishments.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the component of the Islamic commercial connection that most enhanced the Danya-wati river basin's authority in the Rahkaing littoral was access to Muslim firearms. Generally, warfare in early modern Southeast Asia consisted of armies of elephants, horses, and warriors armed with spears, bows and arrows, and often warboats. Firearms, while generally not altering traditional styles of combat, often discouraged continued resistance by opponents who were not equally armed. In many cases, the daunting sight and explosive sounds of firearms were often sufficient in themselves to frighten off armies not yet introduced to such weapons. But most importantly, firearms increased the tactical advantage of Mrauk-U armies by increasing the physical distance from and the accuracy with which they could inflict casualties on an opponent, and by enhancing the defensive strength of Rahkaing fortified towns, especially the royal capital at Mrauk-U.<sup>11</sup> For example, after extending the town, digging the reservoirs, and rebuilding the walls, Min-ba-kri filled it with muskets, cannon, and mortars, all likely of Muslim origin. These preparations helped Mrauk-U repulse a Portuguese attack in 1534.<sup>12</sup> Ta-bin-shwei-hti's attacks on Thantwei in 1545 and Mrauk-U in 1546 likewise failed when his forces were repulsed with cannonfire.<sup>13</sup>

Muslim connections and increasing royal access to commercial revenues also made it possible for early Mrauk-U rulers to hire Muslim mercenaries, most of whom came, apparently, from eastern India, particularly Bengal<sup>14</sup> and, beginning in the late 16th century, the great Muslim trading state of Masulipatam. The first such

<sup>10</sup> This practice is best hinted at in an observation made in the early 17th century of the Rahkaing king: "He is very kind to strangers, giving good respect and entertainment to Moores, Persians and Arabians, which live in his countrey, professing publiquely the practice of their Mahumetan superstition." See William Methwold, "Relations of the Kingdome of Golchonda and Other Neighbouring Nations, within the Gulfe of Bengala, Arreccan, Pegu, Tanassery, etc., and the English Trade in Those Parts," in *Relations of Golconda in the Early Seventeenth Century*, W. H. Moreland, ed. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1931), 42.

<sup>11</sup> These and other tactical advantages offered to early modern Burmese armies are aptly described in Lieberman, "Europeans, Trade and the Unification of Burma, c. 1540-1620," *Oriens Extremus* 27(2):211 (1980).

<sup>12</sup> Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan* (Mandalay: Hanthawaddy Press, 1932), II:48-49.

<sup>13</sup> Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 15a.

<sup>14</sup> Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 11b.

mercenaries accompanied Nara-meik-hla on his return from those places to Mrauk-U in 1430.<sup>15</sup> Other contingents continued to arrive from other Muslim states, Masulipatam, for example, into the early 17th century.<sup>16</sup> This increasing military strength allowed early Mrauk-U rulers to bring rival centers into submission, increase control over centers already under subjugation, and discourage hill tribes from engaging in debilitating raids. Firearm-bearing troops were concentrated in the Danya-wati river basin and in outlying centers at the coastal frontiers, thus strengthening central authority over the most distant royal holdings while simultaneously denying other major centers within the Rahkaing littoral access to such firearms.

As maritime trade became increasingly centered on Mrauk-U,<sup>17</sup> so too did trade in commodities from the interior hill areas (a notable source of musk and rubies<sup>18</sup>) and Upper Myanma. The coastal ports in a better position to vend their own produce, and they could also function as affluent bottlenecks in the flow of commodities from inland areas to external markets. Trade between Rahkaing and Myanma in particular was subject to change in response to political disunity in the latter region, as occurred during those periods when Upper and Middle Myanma were isolated from the coasts by hostile Lower Delta kings. In the 15th century, for example, the Upper Myanma ruby trade was re-routed over the Rahkaing Yoma as a result of ongoing conflicts between Awa and Hantha-wati, only to be reverted back through the Lower Myanma Delta when armed conflicts between Rahkaing and Myanma arose along the ruby-trade route in 1469<sup>19</sup> and warfare between the Myanma north and the Mun (Mon) south died out in the latter part

<sup>15</sup> Anonymous, *Rahkaing Mìn-raza-krì Arei-taw Sadan*, 11b.

<sup>16</sup> See *Rahkaing Mìn-raza-krì Sadan*, 11b. A contingent of six hundred Muslim mercenaries, for example, was reduced to ten men after their boat sank in a storm during their passage to Rahkaing. See Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, III:84.

<sup>17</sup> As Tomé Pires explains, Rahkaing "has a good port on the sea, where the Peguans, the Bengalees and the Klings trade . . . . The port is called Myohaung." Pires, *Suma Oriental*, I:95-96.

<sup>18</sup> Pires says that these commodities were "the chief thing in the kingdom of Arakan." Pires, *Suma Oriental*, I:96.

<sup>19</sup> For unclear reasons, although perhaps in response to some unrecorded Rahkaing attempts to prevent Myanma traders from reaching Mrauk-U's maritime port, the Myanmas, led by the *mró-zà* (town-eater) of Salin, Thadokyaw, invaded Danya-wati via the An pass in 1469. The Myanmas withdrew after negotiations reached a presumably temporary solution. See Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:32.

of the century.<sup>20</sup> The Rahkaing Yoma routes were temporarily reestablished in the first decade of the 17th century when Awa again became sequestered from Lower-Delta ports by the Portuguese mercenary-cum-ruler of Than-lyn (Syriam),<sup>21</sup> but after that the primary direction of Myanma trade seems to have settled to the south and remained so for the rest of the Mrauk-U dynastic period. Although there is evidence of Thantwei and Prei (Prome) maintaining religious and political connections over the Rahkaing Yoma in similar times of isolation from the coasts, I have found no evidence of significant levels of commercial exchange between these two centers.<sup>22</sup>

Commercial traffic in the Rahkaing littoral, now centered on Mrauk-U and Sittagaung (Chittagong), expanded as Portuguese traders entered the Bay of Bengal in the 16th century. Despite initial difficulties in establishing a mutually beneficial relationship, the early Mrauk-U kings actively sought out connections with the Portuguese.<sup>23</sup> By the 1580s, the Portuguese and the Parsees, "using

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<sup>20</sup> As Tomé Pires explained in the second decade of the 16th century, the hill peoples of the Rahkaing Yoma "bring musk and rubies to the great city of Ava . . . and from there they go to Pegu, and from Pegu they are distributed to Bengal, Narsinga and to Pase and Malacca." Pires, *Suma Oriental*, I:96.

<sup>21</sup> The Rahkaing embassy to Awa in 1609 was preceded by Nyaun-yan-mìn's order to establish such a trade connection. As one account relates, Nyaun-yan-mìn ordered to be built across the Rahkaing Yoma roads "along which five persons may walk abreast," this so that "trade goods could pass freely to and fro," thus allowing Awa to get "high-quality textiles from lands across the ocean." India Office Library, London, The Henry Burney Collection of Parabaiks, no. 30, excerpt from the Maha-myat-mú-nì Inscription of s. 965. Quoted and cited in Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, 60. For the 1609 Rahkaing embassy to Awa, see Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:159. Guerreiro says that in the first decade of the 17th century Rahkaing and Awa maintained a trading relationship, with Rahkaing serving as an intermediate entrepot both for cotton goods from Choromandel coming to Awa and for exports of rubies from Awa to India. The rubies, says Guerreiro, had previously been shipped through Pei-hkù: "a roupa de Coromandel . . . se provê o reino de Vuá [Awa] por via de Arracão, por onde corre também o cano da pedraria que a este reino de Pegu costumava vir." See Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, II:318.

<sup>22</sup> Judgement on whether or not this was due to Mrauk-U and Awan efforts to limit commercial intercourse, and thus to enhanced resources at either Thantwei or Prei, will have to wait until more evidence comes to light.

<sup>23</sup> See Cesar Fedrici's description of the Rahkaing king's efforts to bring Portuguese to Mrauk-U in 1567, in Cesar Fedrici, "Extracts of Master Caesar Fredericke his eightene yeesers Indian Observations," in *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchase His Pilgrimes*, Samuel Purchas, ed. (Reprint, Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons, 1905), X:138.

ocean-going ships and boats," came to trade "yearly without fail."<sup>24</sup> While 16th-century trading connections with Pei-hkù (Pegu) were important,<sup>25</sup> Muslim and Portuguese traders and communities remained the chief suppliers of several resources, including mercenaries and firearms, pertinent to early modern state formation.<sup>26</sup>

### Central Role of the Rahkaing Rulers in Regional Commerce

These increasingly complex commercial ties were significantly influenced and directed by the Rahkaing king in his religious, cultural, and economic roles. Political control in Rahkaing operated at an extremely, though not completely, personal and particularistic level. Rather than "govern" the kingdom, the king allowed personal favorites to "eat" the local areas.<sup>27</sup> The political centralization that occurred in the region, therefore, was based not on the establishment of a secular bureaucracy, as one might find in China at the time, but on steady increases in the resource strength and magnetic aura of the central ruler vis-à-vis regional rulers. *Indeed, central ruler* is a particularly appropriate term in this context, since local "eaters" of towns, villages, riverine areas, and so on were the chief intermediaries between the royal court and the people and resources of the outlying areas. These "eaters" ruled their appanages as personal possessions, and the degree to which the king could maintain control of needed resources depended upon his ability to sustain harmonious personal relationships with his local counterparts. On a symbolic level, local "eaters" commanded the same sort of magnetic attraction as that possessed by the king, and they demonstrated this not only by imitating the symbolic structure of the central court (in terms of queens, ministers, a palace, and so on) but also by displaying court regalia. In a sense, these regional demonstrations helped the central ruler maintain his control, for when local rulers adopted court regalia and protocol, they in effect recognized themselves as part of the governing system controlled by

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<sup>24</sup> Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:93.

<sup>25</sup> Pires, *Suma Oriental*, I:95.

<sup>26</sup> See Lieberman's entire discussion of the effects of these resources on Myanma in the last half of the 16th century and the first two decades of the 17th century, in Victor B. Lieberman, "Unification of Burma."

<sup>27</sup> See the reflection of the king's personal relationship with his subjects and royal intermediaries in court documents in Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, 72f, note 31.

the king.<sup>28</sup> This system was reconfirmed with each new monarch in a ceremony in which all vassals were required to swear loyalty to the new king. Of course, symbolic governance had its bureaucratic requirements: scribes were needed to record events and royal incomes; foreign mercenaries had to be paid; and centrally appointed officials or functionaries were gradually coupled with appanage grantees to reduce autonomy. But in general the early modern Rahkaing state functioned on a personal basis and may be accurately characterized, as other precolonial mainland Southeast Asia states have been, as a galactic polity whose structure is reflected in the figure of the mandala.

The viability of this political “system” depended on the degree to which the central ruler was able to sustain his magnetic aura of kingship, which in turn depended upon the proper functioning of a complex network of spiritual and material resource redistribution. As sultan, of course, the Rahkaing king represented the apex of society for Muslim residents in Danya-wati as well as for Islamic traders visiting Rahkaing.<sup>29</sup> But despite the symbolic observance of Islamic rituals and customs, the Mrauk-U rulers’ primary cultural and religious affiliations were to Theravada Buddhism.<sup>30</sup> Tambiah explains that Theravada Buddhist kings in mainland Southeast Asia existed as ideological fusions of the two separate and primary social roles of human ruler and Buddhist *bodhisattva*.<sup>31</sup> The king was

<sup>28</sup> See the classic anthropological study by Arthur M. Hocart, *Kings and Councillors: An Essay in the Comparative Anatomy of Human Society*, edited with an introduction by Rodney Needham, foreword by E. E. Evans-Pritchard, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), esp. 110-112. See also the discussion of Rahkaing kingship in Charney, “Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom of Southeast Asia: Forces of Instability and Political Disintegration in Western Burma (Arakan), 1603-1701.”

<sup>29</sup> J. M. Gullick describes the role of the Sultan in pre-colonial Western Malayan political systems as largely ceremonial and symbolic (of unity) rather than as one invested with direct control over those in the Islamic state. See J. M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya* (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1958), 48-49.

<sup>30</sup> Still, pre-modern rulers could be patrons of more than one god, and anthropological work on pre-modern state systems suggests that the king’s status as intermediary between the people and their god or gods defined the relationship between the ruler and the subjects within a multi-group state. Thus, a king’s role as intermediary between heaven and earth was a cumulative one. In this way, a Theravada Buddhist ruler could also be a patron of Islam, of Christianity, and so on. For the general anthropological perspective, see Hocart, *Kings and Councillors*, 95-100.

<sup>31</sup> Stanley J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 96-97.

responsible for maintaining the religion's unity and purity, providing for its well-being, and securing the arena within which good Buddhists could accrue merit and thus guarantee for themselves a better next life. Religious ideology had a recognizable effect on royal behavior, as kings sought to enhance their legitimacy as rulers by fulfilling their ideological function in material and symbolic ways. Thus, early and late Mrauk-U rulers consistently relegated lands and laborers to Buddhist monasteries,<sup>32</sup> built major religious edifices,<sup>33</sup> and sought to obtain, in peace and war, Buddhist ritual and sacramental objects, including Buddha images and relics,<sup>34</sup> branches of the Bodhi tree,<sup>35</sup> white elephants,<sup>36</sup> and religious texts (i.e. the *Tipitaka*).<sup>37</sup> At least one Mrauk-U ruler went on religious pilgrimage to Bodhgaya in India.<sup>38</sup>

The king's status as *dhamma-raja*, or chief patron, of Buddhism in the Rahkaing littoral was clearly demonstrated to outlying populations by local temple- and monastery-building programs. As the chief secondary center of cultural and commercial activity, Thantwei experienced the major proportion of Mrauk-U temple-building activity outside the Danya-wati river basin. In 1604, Min-raza-kri reconstructed or repaired three great religious works at Thantwei—the San-taw, An-taw, and Nan-taw pagodas—and then re-donated four thousand Bengalis (they had already been donated once before).<sup>39</sup> The Mahamuni shrine seems to have been especially revered. In 1430, the founder of the Mrauk-U dynasty, Nara-meik-hla, built a road to the Mahamuni, to which place he subsequently promoted numerous pilgrimages.<sup>40</sup> A more fundamental step was taken by Min-ba-kri, who in 1536 ordered that stone copies of the Mahamuni be set up in pagodas throughout Danya-wati.<sup>41</sup> Another

<sup>32</sup> Anonymous, *Rahkaing Mín-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 21a; Kawithara (Monk of Dwara-wati), *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 1787, microfilmed palm-leaf manuscript, collected by the Burma Academic Expedition of Kagoshima University (Japan), 55b.

<sup>33</sup> Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 54.

<sup>34</sup> Kulà, *Maha-Razawin-kyì*, III:101.

<sup>35</sup> Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 52.

<sup>36</sup> Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 54b.

<sup>37</sup> Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:32, 148; Kulà, *Maha-Razawin-kyì*, III:101.

<sup>38</sup> Anonymous, *Rahkaing Mín-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 14a; Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 52.

<sup>39</sup> Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 22a; Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 55b.

<sup>40</sup> Forchhammer, *Report*, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Forchhammer, *Report*, 7.

separate means of demonstrating the king's religious status was through the reordination in Danya-wati of monks from throughout the kingdom, a practice that may have helped focus the monkhood's support on the central Mrauk-U ruler and thus initiated a rudimentary infrastructure for regional cultural and religious cohesion.

In his efforts continually to demonstrate that he above all others was the patron of Buddhism, the king sought to monopolize the material resources of the kingdom. Theoretically, everything in the kingdom—living beings and material objects alike—were the king's to dispose of at will. On a practical level, however, this dispensation was subject to the constraints of social sentiment and to the complex political arrangements through which secular control of the court and kingdom was forged and maintained. Victorious military commanders had to be rewarded to ensure continued successes and loyalty;<sup>42</sup> potential heirs to the throne had to be assuaged with attractive appanage grants; and foreign clients and mercenaries had to be paid so as not to leave the kingdom or, worse still, support a rival claimant to the throne.<sup>43</sup> Thus, in addition to being the chief patron of the Buddhist religion and the center of Rahkaing society, the Mrauk-U king served as the focal point of an important network of shared wealth.<sup>44</sup> In this capacity, he monopolized for purposes of redistribution the bulk of commercial revenues and commodities, including luxury goods. When a war campaign proved successful, the spoils would be sent *en toto* to the king, who would proceed to redistribute many of them to the commanders and (sometimes) warriors of the campaign as well as to other important personages.<sup>45</sup> At the top of this redistributive and

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<sup>42</sup> See the discussion of this need in Tambiah, *World Conqueror*, 120.

<sup>43</sup> On the relationship between commercial revenues and the use of mercenaries, who, unlike regional levies, "joined central forces directly to the crown," see Lieberman, "Unification of Burma," 207. On the unreliability of such mercenaries, presumably when they could not be paid, see Victor Lieberman, "Was the Seventeenth Century a Watershed in Burmese History?" in *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief*, Anthony Reid, ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 228.

<sup>44</sup> As Polyani explains, a redistributive system assumes by its very nature some degree of centralization. See Polyani, "The Economy as Instituted Process," in *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory*, Karl Polyani, Conrad M. Arensberg, and Harry W. Pearson, eds. (New York: Free Press, 1957), 250.

<sup>45</sup> See examples in Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:50, 51, 52, 78, 171. This fits well with the redistributive model posited by Polyani. See Karl Polyani, "Instituted Process," 253–254.

trading arrangement, the status of the ruler was most aggrandized, while that of others was enhanced to lesser degrees commensurate with social distance from the king.

### Mechanisms of Control over Outlying Centers

Rahkaing rulers altered titular relations between the Danya-wati river basin and other major political centers in the Rahkaing littoral by replacing the indigenous ruling elite with progeny of the court of Mrauk-U and their retinues. As an example, prior to 1437 the ruler of Thantwei, while nominally subject to Mrauk-U control, retained sufficient autonomy to be considered a *min* (king) in his own right. As far as I can ascertain, the Thantwei royal family had no immediate connection, not even by marriage, with the ruling dynasty of Mrauk-U.<sup>46</sup> They had for centuries been nominal vassals of the Danya-wati rulers, but this arrangement had not been reinforced or tested for a considerable period of time. After the direct acquisition of Thantwei by Mrauk-U in 1437, the local ruling family was removed to Mrauk-U and replaced by a Mrauk-U dynastic prince, and the Thantwei queen was married to the Mrauk-U king.<sup>47</sup>

Thereafter, Mrauk-U political control over Thantwei required authorization from two sources. First, there had to be titular relations with the Mrauk-U court. The title of the rulership of Thantwei per se was reduced from independent *min* to *mró-zà* 'town-eater' and remained so for the remainder of the early Mrauk-U period. This both reflected Thantwei's reduced significance as a potential rival of Mrauk-U and lessened the autonomy of the Thantwei court vis-à-vis other local and formerly less important political centers. Second, the *mró-zà*-ship of Thantwei throughout the early Mrauk-U period was usually granted to the *ein-shei-min* (heir-apparent) of the central

<sup>46</sup> After Laùn-kret fell to the Myanmas, the *yua-zà* (village-eater) of Thon-yua (three villages) from the eastern country "established his rule over the town of Thantwei and then made himself *min*." See Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:21. The "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," however, holds that Ali Khan was the eater of Thantwei at the time of the Myanma invasion and that it was he who recaptured Mrauk-U. Upon his return of the throne to his brother, Nara-meik-hla, Nara-meik-hla made him the *ein-shei-min* (heir-apparent). See Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 42. Due to other discrepancies in the "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," which is a record of advice given by the great ministers to the Rahkaing king rather than a complete and detailed history of Rahkaing, I tentatively accept Sanda Malalinkaya's version. In any case, the effect of both versions is the same: the relationship between Mrauk-U and Thantwei was permanently changed.

<sup>47</sup> Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:23.

court at Mrauk-U.<sup>48</sup> This meant that the Thantwei ruler's chief claim to authority hinged on the well-being of the Mrauk-U court. As the future *mìn* of Mrauk-U, the *ein-shei-mìn* generally had a vested interest in assuring Mrauk-U's control over Thantwei so long as his status as *ein-shei-mìn* was not called into question within the Mrauk-U court. A survey of events during the following two centuries supports the view that challenges by the Thantwei *mró-zà*/Mrauk-U *ein-shei-mìn* to the authority of Mrauk-U were rare and occurred only if the status of the Thantwei ruler as *ein-shei-min* was in doubt. And even then, the Thantwei ruler invariably sought to enhance his power only in order to re-enforce dynastic control within the Mrauk-U central court, not as a means of gaining complete independence.<sup>49</sup>

The other side of the political relationship between Mrauk-U and Thantwei was that it was difficult for the king of Mrauk-U to replace the *ein-shei-mìn* should the latter not act as desired. After a dispute in 1546, for example, Min-ba-kri took back the *mró-zà*-ship of Thantwei (and presumably the *ein-shei-min*-ship as well) from his younger brother Min-awn-hla. When Min-aun-hla appealed to the Myanma king Ta-bin-shwei-hti for help, the latter sent Bayin-naun with a large force to assist Thantwei in its contest with Mrauk-U. The campaign failed,<sup>50</sup> but the threat it posed to the central court underscored the importance of a stable relationship between the Mrauk-U king and the *mró-zà* of Thantwei.

When Sittagaung was brought under Mrauk-U central control in the late 15th century, governance was effected by coupling techniques followed in Thantwei with additional controls. Local administrative practices were replaced with Danya-wati-defined ones (the system of land measurement in Rahkaing *drones*, for

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<sup>48</sup> See examples in Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:42, 57, 62, 66, 69, 78, 154; Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 42, 46.

<sup>49</sup> Consider in this regard Min-kamaun's failed revolt against Thantwei, in which he sought to seize the throne of Mrauk-U and revitalize Danya-wati's resources, which had been depleted by a long series of military defeats under the incumbent, his father, Min-raza-kri. Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 22a.

<sup>50</sup> Kulà, *Maha-Razawin-kyì*, II:211. Although Ta-bin-shwei-hti succeeded in seizing Laùn-kret town, his forces could not stand up against the fire of cannon and small arms from in front, Rahkaing attacks from behind, and the dearth of supplies after the *mró-zà* of Sittagaung's forces burned the fields of unharvested rice, upon which Ta-bin-shwei-hti presumably depended to feed his besieging troops. See Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:71; Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 15a.

example), and the Rahkaing calendar was adopted.<sup>51</sup> Again, the local ruler was removed to the central court at Mrauk-U. In his place was appointed sometimes a low-ranking Mrauk-U prince but usually a minister not in line for succession to the throne.<sup>52</sup> The lack of royal legitimacy or immediately recognizable claims to kingship reduced the potential for the rise of a competing royal center at Sittagaung.<sup>53</sup> As a further guarantee, the central court effectively checked the *mró-zà*'s authority by coupling it with that of a centrally appointed commissioner, or *u-si*, who commanded a garrison of firearm-bearing troops. Without regalia, and with his own power reciprocally checked by the presence of the *mró-zà*, the *u-si* depended for his authority on the continued dominance of Mrauk-U over Sittagaung. To prevent the *u-si* from either forging a potentially dangerous alliance with the *mró-zà* or building a local power base of his own, his person and his garrison were rotated on a yearly basis.<sup>54</sup> As yet a third check on the self-aggrandizement of the Sittagaung authorities, the early Mrauk-U kings granted considerable autonomy to the Portuguese trading communities around Sittagaung and nurtured their loyalty with royal stipends of up to thirty thousand

<sup>51</sup> M. Ali, "Arakan Rule in Chittagong (1550-1666 A.D.)." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* 12(3):337 (1967).

<sup>52</sup> See the discussion of the grant of the *mró-zà*-ship of Sittagaung to the minister Wimala in early 16th century, in Anonymous, "Danya-wati Areitaw-poun," 49. Perhaps the most famous of the minister-*mró-zà*'s of Sittagaung, was Maha-binnya-kyaw, whose lineage was given the *mró-zà*-ship of Sittagaung in perpetuity. When Maha-binnya-kyaw died in 1599, his son Kyinyo took his place. See Anonymous, "Danya-wati Areitaw-poun," 114, 116; Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Areitaw Sadan*, 15b, 21a; Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 53b. See also mention of a circa 1630s appointment of a Rahkaing noble, a "Mogo principal," as Sittagaung *mró-zà*, in Sebastião Manrique, *Itinerário de Sebastião Manrique*, Luis Silveira, ed. (Lisboa: Divisão de Publicações e Biblioteca, Agência Geral das Colónias, 1946), I:81.

<sup>53</sup> This point is reinforced by the few exceptions to the general practice. Within a year of his appointment as the *mró-zà* of Sittagaung, Min-raza-kri's younger brother was removed from Sittagaung for failing to support his kingly brother's authority in the region. See Anonymous, "Danya-wati Areitaw-poun," 114. Further, the most important and nearly successful rebellion of Sittagaung before the mid-17th century occurred in 1609, after Min-raza-kri's younger son, who had been given the Sittagaung *mró-zà*-ship, rebelled with the help of Portuguese freebooters. See Manrique, *Itinerário* I:274-275.

<sup>54</sup> In Sittagaung, the royal court assigned a new *u-si* each year from Mrauk-U. The new *u-si* was assigned a force of one hundred ships, as well as men and arms, and was then sent to Sittagaung. Upon his arrival at Sittagaung, the incumbent *u-si*, along with his ships and men, was sent back to the capital. See Jadunath Sarkar (trans.), "The Feringi Pirates of Chatgaon, 1665 A.D.," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (New Series) 3(6):421 (1907).

*crusados* annually.<sup>55</sup> Being self-governed, the Portuguese communities presented a substantial check to local political domination by either the Sittagaung *mró-zà* or the *u-si*.<sup>56</sup> In addition, Portuguese domination of trade limited the *mró-zà*'s ability to rise in power through the accumulation and redistribution of commercial resources.

One should not, however, overestimate Sittagaung as an early commercial rival to Mrauk-U. During the period of Rahkaing control, Afghan pirates and then Portuguese freebooters dominated Sundiva Island adjacent to the rich Megna trade route and forestalled the commercial florescence that Sittagaung later experienced in the 17th century. Furthermore, Mrauk-U kings consistently tried to attract new Portuguese traders away from Sittagaung to Mrauk-U in the 16th century.<sup>57</sup> If the distribution of Portuguese trading vessels is any indication of the relative attraction of Rahkaing littoral ports for maritime traders, it seems clear that 16th-century Sittagaung was of less importance as a trading port than either Sundiva or Mrauk-U.<sup>58</sup>

Newly conquered areas whose long-term submission and loyalty was in doubt were placed under the control of nominal *mró-zàs* 'town-eaters' or *krei-zàs* 'settlement-eaters', who in turn were supported by *sit-kès* 'military commissioners' in command of the occupying warriors. After one successful expedition into Bengal, for example, the prince Nga-inga was made nominal *mró-zà* of the Bengalese town of Mauk-thuza and the surrounding region. Two *sit-kès* commanded the Rahkaing forces stationed in the conquered areas, with the left-hand *sit-kè*, Mìn-kaun, governing the town of Dacca and the right-hand *sit-kè* placed at Mauk-thuza to guard the

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<sup>55</sup> See Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, I:44.

<sup>56</sup> Guerreiro says that in Sittagaung, the Portuguese were given nearly all of the port. See Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, I:44. A clear instance of a check on the *u-si*'s power occurred in 1567, when the Portuguese of Sittagaung took up "armes against the Retor [*u-si*] of that place and every day there were some slain . . . but the Governour of the Towne did comfort us," even after the Portuguese in Sittagaung had killed the previous "governor" of the city. See Fedrici, "Indian Observations," in *Hakluytus Posthumus*, X:137-138. Far from a threat to the rulers of Mrauk-U, such disturbances in Mrauk-U may have helped Mrauk-U kings stave off the rise of an indigenous commercial rival well into the 17th century.

<sup>57</sup> See Fedrici, "Indian Observations," in *Hakluytus Posthumus*, X:138.

<sup>58</sup> Guerreiro, writing in the first decade of the 17th century, says of local Portuguese trading ships on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal that sixty were in Sundiva, thirty were in Mrauk-U, and only ten were in Sittagaung. See Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, I:293.

*mró-zà* and to set up the stone pillars marking Rahkaing overlordship.<sup>59</sup> A similar though less successful arrangement was attempted in 1599 at Than-lyn, where a Portuguese mercenary commander, Philippe de Brito de Nicote, was made *krei-zà* 'settlement-eater'.<sup>60</sup> De Brito's authority was checked, however, by the presence of a military garrison under the command of a Mun lord, the *binnya* of Dala.<sup>61</sup> The two men had numerous squabbles, and the arrangement failed when De Brito, aided by Portuguese mercenaries and local Muns, overthrew the *binnya*, forced the rival garrison into flight, and, while refusing to send tribute to the Mrauk-U king, declared himself king of Than-lyn.<sup>62</sup>

### Demographics of Growth and Expansion

In time, commercial growth in the Danya-wati river basin and the centralization under Mrauk-U authority of military and political power in the Rahkaing littoral became self-promoting. Most important, these processes led to increased manpower reserves, the expansion of agriculture, and greater access to maritime-derived commerce, including the acquisition of firearms and mercenary services. Given Danya-wati's apparently small population (even when supplemented by commercial and military resources), Mrauk-U could not indefinitely extend its authority over outlying centers while at the same time preventing raids by hill tribes and invasions by the more populous neighbors to the north and east. The shortage of manpower was partially offset by Mrauk-U's early victories against other centers within the Rahkaing littoral, from which it

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<sup>59</sup> Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 54.

<sup>60</sup> The Rahkaing chronicles spell this word a number of ways, each of which could be interpreted to mean something different within this particular context. Thus, depending upon spelling, De Brito was either the "village-eater," the "money-eater" (that is, a local customs collector), or simply a mercenary. Some chronicles, however, use *mró-zà* instead of *krei-zà*, which implies that De Brito was made a village-eater, or a *mró-zà*, depending upon whether one considered Than-lyn a town or a village. I have used *settlement-eater* here to distinguish this kind of appanage from the more common *yua-zà*, which is also translated into English as "village-eater."

<sup>61</sup> See Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, I:292; Manuel de Fariah e Sousa, *Ásia Portuguesa*, translated from Spanish into Portuguese by Isabel Ferreira do Amaral Perreira de Matos and Maria Vitoria Garcia Santos Ferreira, with an introduction by M. Lopes de Almeida (Porto: Livraria Civilização, 1945), V:246-247.

<sup>62</sup> See Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, I:292; Sousa, *Ásia Portuguesa*, V:247-253; Kulà, *Maha-Razawin-kyì*, III:109; Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 21a, 21b.

transferred to the Danya-wati basin significant numbers of captive laborers. In the long term, however, other means were employed to help increase the level of available manpower, and these arrangements both resulted from and helped sustain the military, commercial, and political developments discussed above.

One likely boost to demographic stability and growth was a ninety-year hiatus in Myanma incursions through the An pass. The Myanmas had invaded the Danya-wati delta in 1408 and held it until 1430, when military reversals led to the fall of Laùn-kret and the execution of the Myanma-placed Laùn-kret king and his ministers.<sup>63</sup> In 1469, a second Myanma invasion was successfully repulsed, presumably with heavy casualties.<sup>64</sup> Conceivably, growing Mrauk-U resources, political centralization, and military power made the prospects for Myanma invaders increasingly less attractive. Thus, Danya-wati itself may have produced the conditions that led to the ninety-year hiatus. When Ta-bin-shwei-hti invaded in the mid-16th century, he effectively *increased* rather than reduced Danya-wati dominance within the Rahkaing littoral, for in contrast to the 1469 invasion, his attacks on Rahkaing chiefly followed the sea-route around Cape Negrais, which meant that Thantwei suffered the first assaults and the longest occupations.<sup>65</sup> These factors, together with the destructive consequences of such local defensive measures as burning or otherwise hoarding paddy from the sparse agricultural lands in the region,<sup>66</sup> likely mean that Thantwei's potential for growth was severely reduced while Danya-wati received significant influxes of refugees from Thantwei.

Political instability in Myanma aided population growth throughout the Rahkaing littoral, as both Myanma and Mun refugees crossed the Rahkaing Yoma and established new villages.<sup>67</sup> Although many of the Myanmas returned to their homeland once peace was restored there, some remained, as did most Muns. The affinities these groups shared with the dominant Myanma culture of

<sup>63</sup> Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-krì Arei-taw Sadan*, 11b; Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 42.

<sup>64</sup> Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:32.

<sup>65</sup> Kulà, *Maha-Razawin-kyi*, III:60.

<sup>66</sup> See an account of such an action in Kulà, *Maha-Razawin-kyi*, II:189-193, 211-217, III:60; *Hmannan Maha-Razawin-kyi* (Mandalay: Pitaka Sahout-daih-hsain, 1963), II:229-230, 233-234.

<sup>67</sup> In the late 16th century, for example, Muns fled to Rahkaing, amongst other destinations. See Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, I:292. See the case of the Myanmas' flight into Rahkaing from the Muns in 1753 in Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 130.

the region possibly aided their absorption into Danya-wati society, particularly in major centers such as Thantwei. Other perhaps less numerous refugees were garnered from Mrauk-U's maritime connections: expatriate Japanese Christians and Portuguese freebooters, for example, were clearly present by the early 17th century.<sup>68</sup>

Another concern of early Mrauk-U dynastic rulers was the eradication and sometimes absorption of hostile non-Rakhine tribes in the lowland and, more gradually, upland areas. Such tribes raided lowland villages, burned temples and towns, killed royal soldiers, looted, and above all took many lowlanders into captivity.<sup>69</sup> Mrauk-U dynastic rulers throughout the 15th and early 16th centuries sought ways to end such raids. Sometimes, as with the Thets, the Mrón, and the Linkei,<sup>70</sup> local leaders were not replaced but were granted new regalia and perhaps even princesses of the Mrauk-U royal family.<sup>71</sup> Such arrangements were tenuous at best in their early stages but often gained strength with time. In cases of continued recalcitrance, selected rebels were castrated and entered into the royal *mawleik*, a class of eunuchs in the Rahkaing court.

The process of political integration into the Rahkaing kingdom is exemplified in the case of the Thets, a hill tribe of the Northern Rahkaing littoral just south of Sittagaung. In 1476, after Mrauk-U forces repelled a Thet raid, the Rahkaing forces presumably pursued, for those Thets who fled to the west were later captured.<sup>72</sup> In 1514, after Min-raza moved the Mrauk-U capital to the new city of Weithali, the Thets from Barein attacked and expelled the king from his new capital, setting up in his place one of their own leaders, whom they gave the title *Maw-raza*. But Min-raza's successor, Gazabati, drove the Thets from Weithali shortly after he was made king.<sup>73</sup> By 1518, the Thet king had again submitted to vassalage, in return for which the Rahkaing king conferred upon him the title of *Kaùn-hla-pyu* and gifted him with royal regalia (said to be the "same as that of the *mró-zà* of Thantwei"), Rahkaing clothes, and clothing

<sup>68</sup> For mention of a Japanese Christian community in Mrauk-U in Manrique, see *Itinerário*, I:147.

<sup>69</sup> One such raid is described in Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:64.

<sup>70</sup> Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 53b.

<sup>71</sup> See mention of a grant of Danya-wati regalia to vassal hill tribe rulers in Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 54.

<sup>72</sup> Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:32-33.

<sup>73</sup> Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:39.

and regalia for his ministers.<sup>74</sup> After several more uprisings, the Mrauk-U king, in addition to appointing *yua-zàs* over the Thet villages, reinstalled the Thet king with royal regalia and ordered him to set about making the “holy *sasana* [‘religion’] thrive and shine proudly.”<sup>75</sup> Despite minor reoccurring revolts in the 1590s, the Thet king was allowed to retain his throne as a Rahkaing vassal, and Thet levies (under the the king’s own command) became a regular supplement to Rahkaing armies in campaigns against Myanma and against Yòdayà (Ayuhdya) forces engaged in the siege of Taun-ngu in 1600.<sup>76</sup> This same kind of arrangement seems to have been instituted on the now much-fragmented island of Chocoria, between Ramu and Sittagaùng,<sup>77</sup> where the local ruler retained the island as a vassal kingdom to the Mrauk-U court and accompanied, along with his war levies, the Rahkaing campaign against Than-lyn in 1607.<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps the most significant manpower inputs during the 16th and early 17th centuries resulted from the more effective military campaigns into Bengal and Lower Myanma, where the aforementioned political dislocation facilitated foreign invasion.<sup>79</sup> Such warfare became progressively less draining on Rahkaing as Mrauk-U rulers extracted increasingly larger manpower and resource levies from the vassal states. Major levies were exacted from the Thets, the Mróns, and the Linkeis, and deep-sea boats (*thin-baw*) were drawn from the twelve Bengal towns under Mrauk-U control.<sup>80</sup> The composition of Mrauk-U’s force in the 1516 campaign against Prei (which had invaded Rahkaing and taken over one thousand captives, all repatriated during the retaliatory campaign<sup>81</sup>)

<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, and perhaps indicating the growing prestige attributed to the Moslem court in Bengal by the Rahkaing kings, the clothing and regalia given by the Rahkaing king to the Thet ministers on this occasion were said to be the same as those adorning Kulà officials (referred to as *tanás*). See Anonymous, “Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun,” 54.

<sup>75</sup> Sanda Malalinkaya, *Rahkaing Razawin-thet-kyan*, II:85.

<sup>76</sup> Anonymous, “Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun,” 114, 115; Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 53b.

<sup>77</sup> Abdul Karim, “Chittagong Coast as Described by Sidi Ali Chelebi, a Sixteenth Century Turkish Navigator,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* 16(3):238-240 (1971).

<sup>78</sup> See Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, III:78.

<sup>79</sup> In the case of Lower Myanma, for example, even the Myanma chronicles explain that First Taun-ngu contingents in important ports like Than-lyn were “unable to resist” Rahkaing forces in 1597 and fled their attacks. Kulà, *Maha-Razawin-kyi*, III:97. For a discussion of a Mrauk-U raid into the Bengal region, see Anonymous, “Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun,” 50-51.

<sup>80</sup> Anonymous, “Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun,” 114.

<sup>81</sup> Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 15a.

may be indicative of the significance of non-Rahkaing conscriptions to Rahkaing armies: royal soldiers from Danya-wati made up 66% of the force, while the remaining troops consisted of Kanrans (17%) and Thets (17%).<sup>82</sup> In the 1598-99 campaign against Pei-hkù (Pegu), the ratio of non-ethnic Rahkaing to ethnic Rahkaing grew, with Bengalis comprising 16% of the force, Thets 13%, Kanrans 10%, and other vassals and mercenaries 26%. These figures suggest that in this particularly important campaign, less than half of the forces were ethnically Rahkaing.<sup>83</sup> Considering that the chronicles do not specify how many "Rahkaing" soldiers were from non-Danya-wati areas such as Dwara-wati (which seems to have provided the bulk of the soldiers for this and subsequent campaigns), one can reasonably conclude that in eighty years' time the proportion of war levies from non-Danya-wati areas compared to those from within Danya-wati more than doubled.

Aside from providing the impetus for adding large numbers of conscript soldiers to Mrauk-U's armies, the raids into Bengal and Lower Myanma brought to the Danya-wati region large numbers of war captives. During times of extreme political dislocation in Lower Myanma, particularly in the 1598-1607 period, early Mrauk-U raids into Lower Myanma resulted in the acquisition of large numbers of Mun and Yòdayà families who were brought to Rahkaing and resettled as agriculturalists. Although the numbers given are so large as to suggest hyperbole, it is likely that the new settlers numbered in the thousands.<sup>84</sup> Most appear to have been settled in villages in the Danya-wati river basin, although lesser numbers went to other important centers, such as Ran-prei Island and Thantwei.<sup>85</sup> Out of the Yòdayà and Mun families taken in 1600, the Yòdayà families were resettled in eight groups distributed throughout Danya-wati,<sup>86</sup> while the Mun families were settled in groups on Ngazinyain

<sup>82</sup> Percentages based on figures provided in Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 14a.

<sup>83</sup> Ratios compiled from figures presented in Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 115, and in Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 16b.

<sup>84</sup> Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 54b.

<sup>85</sup> On the placement of five thousand Muns, Pyus, and Bengalis in Dwara-wati in 1518, see Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 78; For the settlement in Danya-wati and Rama-wati of war captives taken in 1600 from Lower Myanma, see Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 54b.

<sup>86</sup> See also Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 116; Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 21a; and Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 54b.

Island.<sup>87</sup> Some few of these groups were assigned to provide food to the monasteries, but most became involved in secular agriculture.<sup>88</sup>

### **Commercial Significance of Mrauk-U Military Campaigns**

Aside from campaigns against Dacca, successful campaigns against hill tribes and lowland rivals within the Rahkaing littoral seem to have brought little wealth (although it did supply manpower) for redistribution. Campaigns in the late 1590s against Pei-hkù, however, were a different matter. While accounts of the value of war-booty taken from Lower Myanma towns such as Pathein (Bassein), Than-lyn, Makaw,<sup>89</sup> and Pei-hkù are probably exaggerated,<sup>90</sup> it is likely that it was considerable.<sup>91</sup> Gold, silver, textiles, and other goods taken both from Yòdayà armies and from Taun-ngu in 1600 also seem to have been sizable.<sup>92</sup> As the Mrauk-U kings shifted their campaigns out of the increasingly secure Rahkaing littoral, acquired booty began to include significant amounts of gunpowder and firearms. In the early 16<sup>th</sup>-century campaign into northeast Bengal, the king ordered that aside from gold and silver textiles, only muskets, cannon, and ammunition would be demanded in tribute.<sup>93</sup> The 1516 victory against Prei likewise brought a tribute of cannon, muskets, and other weapons.<sup>94</sup> In 1600, the Yòdayà king sent three thousand cannon (*pyaunmi-bauk*)

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<sup>87</sup> Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 116; Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 54b.

<sup>88</sup> On the donation of Muns in Kawithara, see *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 55b.

<sup>89</sup> At Makaw, the king gathered silver and other treasures. See Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, I:47.

<sup>90</sup> Guerreiro says that the wealth left behind by the king of Taun-ngu after he pillaged Pei-hkù still amounted to three million gold (coins?). See Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, I:45.

<sup>91</sup> Both Portuguese and Rahkaing accounts mention immense religious statues made of gold and jewelry. See Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, I:45; Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 116.

<sup>92</sup> Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 116; Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 54b.

<sup>93</sup> Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 51. That supplies of firearms were gained from Bengal is also suggested by a notation in the Rahkaing chronicles according to which only the war levies from vassal areas, such as Bengal, came armed with muskets and firearms in the 1598-99 campaign against Pei-hkù. See, for example, Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 115. See also Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 54a.

<sup>94</sup> Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-krì Arei-taw Sadan*, 15a.

in exchange for a Yòdayà prince (younger brother of the king) who had been captured in fighting on the Sittang in 1599.<sup>95</sup>

Finally, the expansion of royal control through the late 15th and 16th centuries brought increased access to new commodities that could be funneled into maritime trade. One could point, for instance, to the provisioning of deep-sea ships by outlying vassals, particularly the Bengali areas.<sup>96</sup> Significant supplies of cotton and cloth entered Rahkaing markets from districts in Tippera adjacent to Sittagaung.<sup>97</sup> From another perspective, one could suggest that increasingly secure lowlands and agricultural expansion within the Danya-wati river basin, made possible by increased labor inputs by the end of the 16th century, allowed Mrauk-U rulers to divert grain surpluses into maritime commerce. It is not until the early 17th century, for example, that one finds reference to exports of rice from Mrauk-U.<sup>98</sup>

### Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined several factors involved in the rise of the Danya-wati-dominated Rahkaing kingdom. Rahkaing depended heavily upon maritime-derived resources for its expansion and control through the 15th and 16th centuries. However, it was the king's role as symbolic and material center that held the system together. Danya-wati's growth was enhanced by increasing security from foreign and hill tribe raiding and by manpower inputs gained through increasingly successful military campaigns, as it was by developments in 16th- and 17th-century Myanma, which supplied Danya-wati with commercial resources through trade with Upper Myanma and for nearly a century

<sup>95</sup> Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 116; Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 20b; Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 54b. These sources may actually refer to the 3,200 cannon the king had collected from the king of Pei-hku's fortress at Makaw in the same year. See Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, I:47.

<sup>96</sup> Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 53b, 54a; Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 16a.

<sup>97</sup> Pires observed that in the 1510s, before Rahkaing had extended its control over the area, Tippera possessed an "infinite amount of cotton." See Pires, *Suma Oriental*, I:90; See mention of the acquisition of textiles from Bengal in the early 16th century in Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 51.

<sup>98</sup> As Methwold explained of the trading ships from Golconda, "[t]o Arrecan they send store of tobacco, some iron, and few sorts of painted clothes, and returne from thence some gold and gumme lache, but most part rice, which they sell about Pallecat and that coast of Narsinga." See Methwold, "Relations of the Kingdome of Golchonda," in *Relations of Golconda*, 37-38.

hindered the expansion of the rival center at Thantwei. Mrauk-U rulers were also able to enact policies limiting the commercial and demographic prospects for the potential rival center at Sittagaung.

Early Mrauk-U leaders solicited the loyalty of the dominant Rahkaing-Myanma population and conquered hill tribes, generally through the royal patronage of Buddhism and the exchange of centrally-defined regalia and other cultural equipage. It is uncertain whether Mrauk-U undertook a clearly defined program to integrate into Rahkaing society resettled war captives and other foreign groups, including Muslims and Europeans as well as Muns, Myanmas, Bengalis, and hill tribes people. Such cultural patronage was perhaps not needed in the 15th and 16th centuries, when the wealth and power derived from maritime trade minimized the threat of rebellion by non-Rahkaing groups, many of which were perhaps bonded to the Mrauk-U ruler as vassals and clients. Thus, with his continuing and increasing flow of maritime revenues, luxury goods, and firearms, the king held the disparate peoples of the Rahkaing littoral together as much by economic strength as by socio-religious status and patronage.

In any case, as a result of the growing stature of Mrauk-U in the mid-15th century, Danya-wati received increasing attention from neighboring and even distant polities. This was especially true as more frequent victories against kingdoms in Bengal, India, and Myanma brought not only white elephants but also high-ranking prize-queens whose royal lineages legitimize Mrauk-U dynastic rule in important outlying regions.<sup>99</sup> Recognition by important foreign rulers also took other forms, such as requests for alliances and support from the royal houses of Prei and Taun-ngu.<sup>100</sup> Perhaps even more important in this regard is the fact that by the mid-15th century, the Mrauk-U ruler and the Rahkaing kingdom were considered co-equal in status with the Awa ruler and the kingdom

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<sup>99</sup> See examples of such prize-queens in Kulà, *Maha-Razawin-kyi*, III:99-100, 103; Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 15a, 17a; Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 53b; U Maung Maung Tin, *Kon-baung-hset Maha-Razawin-taw-kyi* (Reprint, Yangon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1968), II:7; Anonymous, "Danya-wati Arei-taw-poun," 52, 54.

<sup>100</sup> On Prei in early 17th century, see Kulà, *Maha-Razawin-kyi*, III:145; on Taun-ngu in late 1590s, see Kulà, *Maha-Razawin-kyi*, III:97; Anonymous, *Rahkaing Min-raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan*, 16a, 17a; Kawithara, *Rahkaing Razawin (Rakhapura)*, 53b; U Maung Maung Tin, *Kon-baung-hset Maha-Razawin-taw-kyi*, II:7.

of Upper Myanma, with which Danya-wati made an arrangement for continued connections over the Rahkaing Yoma.<sup>101</sup>

### Glossary of Place Names and Burmese-language Terms\*

An Pass	[between Prome and Arakan] A route commonly used in Myanma invasions of Danya-wati
Awa	Ava, a Burmese kingdom of the 14th-16th centuries
Barein	A town to the south of Mrauk-U
<i>binnya</i>	Title for a Mon lord
Dala	An area near present-day Rangoon
Danwei	In Arakan
Danya-wati	The deltaic plains watered by the May U, Kuladan, and Leimro rivers in Arakan; The classical name for the Rahkaing (Rakhine) kingdoms based in this area, which is located near present-day Sittwe (Akyah)
Dwara-wati	Classical name for Sandoway
<i>ein-shei-mìn</i>	Heir apparent
Hantha-wati	The Mon kingdom in what later became known as Lower Burma
Kanrans	A people of unclear ethnicity in the Rahkaing Littoral. No longer extant
<i>krei-zà</i>	Eater of the revenues of a village; also a term for a mercenary
Kulà	The Rahkaing term for foreigners from the west, but in the case of the chronicles, particularly from Bengal
Lamu	A town close to the Rahkaing Yoma

<sup>101</sup> See Kulà, *Maha-Razawin-kyì*, II:85-86.

\* Prepared by the editors with the assistance of May Kyi Win, Curator of the Donn V. Hart Collections at Northern Illinois University

Laùn-kret	In Danya-wati region
Linkei	One of the tribes of the Rahkaing Littoral
Makaw	Between Pei-hkù and Syriam
Masulipatam	A Muslim trading state of eastern India
Mauk-thuza	A town, location unknown. Perhaps Sonargaon.
<i>mawleik</i>	A class of eunuchs in the Rahkaing court
Melaka	Malacca, in present-day Malaysia
<i>mìn</i>	King or lord
Mindon	A Myanma town close to the Rahkaing Yoma in the Irrawaddy valley in the Thayetmyo District.
Mrón	A people of the northern Rahkaing Littoral
<i>mró-zà</i>	Governor, revenue-eater, or fief-holder of a town
Mun	Mons, a people inhabiting what today is Lower Burma
Myanma	Burma; Ethnic Burmans
Ngazinyain Island	One of the districts of early modern Rahkaing
Pathein	Bassein
Pei-hkù	Pegu, in Lower Burma
Prei	Prome, an important town on the Irrawaddy River
Rahkaing littoral	The coastal lands between the Bay of Bengal and the Rahkaing Yoma. Today, it is split between Bangladesh and Myanmar (Burma).
Rahkaing Yoma	Arakan Yoma, the range of mountains between the Arakan coast and the Irrawaddy valley
Ramu	A locality in Bangladesh near the Burmese border near present-day Cox's Bazaar
Ran-prei Island	Ramree Island
<i>sit-kè</i>	Military commissioner

Sittagaung	Chittagong, in present-day Bangladesh
Sundiva	Island in bay near Chittagong
Taungup	In Arakan
Taun-ngu	Toungoo
Than-lyn	Syriam, near Rangoon
Thantwei	Sandoway [southern Arakan littoral], a city on the Arakan coast, south of the Danya-wati center
Thet	A tribe in the Rakhaing Littoral, once spread throughout Danya-wati, but today to the south of Chittagong
Tippera	Districts in Bangladesh near Chittagong
<i>u-si</i>	Centrally appointed commissioner
Yòdayà	Ayudhya, a kingdom based in present-day Thailand; Also known as Siam
<i>yua-zà</i>	Eater of the revenues of a village or group of villages

### Chronology of Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Comment</u>
1430	Fall of Laùn-kret, controlled by, and disputed between, Myanma and Mun (back and forth) kingdoms from 1406-1430. Nara-meik-hla (r. 1404-1434) founds town of Mrauk-U and the Mrauk-U dynasty (accepts vassalage under the Muslim sultanate of Bengal). Early Mrauk-U rulers style themselves as Muslim sultans and are chief patrons of Islamic culture at court. But they also promote pilgrimages to Buddhist shrines and are culturally Buddhist at heart.
1437	Ruling family of Thantwei replaced by a Mrauk-U prince. By mid-century, the Rakhaing littoral is unified under Mrauk-U control.

mid 1500s	Awa (Ava) ruler recognizes co-equal status of Mrauk-U.
1469	Myanma attack on Danya-wati (Mrauk-U) prevented.
late 1400s	Control established over Chittagong.
early 1500s	Campaign into NE Bengal.
1514	Min-raza temporarily moves Mrauk-U capital to new city of Weithali.
1514	Thet tribe temporarily rules Mrauk-U.
1516	Victorious Mrauk-U campaign against Prei (Prome), following a raid by the king of Prei. Prei pays tribute.
1518	Thet king again made a Mrauk-U vassal.
1532	Lower Bengal conquered (including Dacca).
1534	Mrauk-U uses firearms to repel a Portuguese attack.
1545, 1546	Myanma attacks (under Ta-bin-shwei-hti) on Thantwei (1545) and Mrauk-U (1546) repulsed with cannon fire.
mid 1500s	Prei (Prome) requests alliance.
late 1500s & early 1600s	Tippera districts near Chittagong brought under control.
1590	Minor revolt by the Thets.
late 1590s	Taung-ngu requests alliance.
1598-99	Campaign against Pei-hkù (Pegu). War booty taken from Pathein (Bassein), Than-lyn (Syriam, near present-day Rangoon), Makaw (between Pegu and Syriam), and Pei-hkù.
1599	Arakanese control Syriam (near present-day Rangoon)
1599	Fighting against Ayutthaya (Siam) on the Sittang River. Younger brother of the Siamese king captured here, and ransomed by Ayutthaya the next year for 3000 cannon and bronze images.

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